

# A STUDY ON THE ABILITY OF THE FOURTH SEMESTER STUDENTS OF ENGLISH STUDY PROGRAM OF RIAU UNIVERSITY IN UNDERSTANDING THE MEANING OF PHRASAL VERBS

Fauziah Army, Syofia Delfi, Eliwarti.

E-mail: [lafreak.zyah96@gmail.com](mailto:lafreak.zyah96@gmail.com), Contact: +628576789186, [syofia\\_delfi@yahoo.com](mailto:syofia_delfi@yahoo.com),  
[elieliwarti@gmail.com](mailto:elieliwarti@gmail.com)

English Study Program  
Language and Art Department  
The Faculty of Teachers' Training and Education  
Riau University

**Abstract:** *The objective of this descriptive research was to find out about students' ability in understanding meaning of phrasal verbs. The sample of this research was the fourth semester students of English Department of Riau University. There were 38 students participate as the sample of this research. The data were quantitative and the instrument of the research was a set of multiple choice test which consist of 50 questions regarding the meaning of phrasal verbs. The data were analyzed by calculating the score of the students in answering the test and classifying them to a certain level of ability using Harris formula. The results were that out of 38 students, 2 students (5.26%) were in excellent level of ability, 11 students (28.95%) were in good level of ability, 7students (18.42%) were in average level of ability, and for the most part, 18 students(47.36%) were in poor level of ability. In addition, the average score of the students in understanding meaning of phrasal verbs was 51.37. It meant that the students' ability in understanding meaning of English phrasal verbs was in the average level of ability. This research recommended the students to make themselves familiar with more elaborated use of phrasal verb. Students can also comprehend more about the conceptualization of phrasal verbs in many contexts by practicing writing and speaking that would require them to use phrasal verbs. Further research can focus on studying each subtopic in details. Other researchers can also focus on how to overcome the high level of difficulties of English phrasal verbs materials.*

**Keywords:** *ability, understanding, phrasal verbs*

# A STUDY ON THE ABILITY OF THE FOURTH SEMESTER STUDENTS OF ENGLISH STUDY PROGRAM OF RIAU UNIVERSITY IN UNDERSTANDING THE MEANING OF PHRASAL VERBS

Fauziah Army, Syofia Delfi, Eliwarti.

E-mail: [lafreak.zyah96@gmail.com](mailto:lafreak.zyah96@gmail.com), Contact: +628576789186, [syofia\\_delfi@yahoo.com](mailto:syofia_delfi@yahoo.com),  
[elieliwarti@gmail.com](mailto:elieliwarti@gmail.com)

Program Studi Bahasa Inggris  
Jurusan Bahasa dan Seni  
Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan  
Universitas Riau

**Abstrak:** Tujuan dari penelitian deskriptif ini adalah untuk mengetahui kemampuan mahasiswa dalam memahami arti dari frasa kata kerja (*phrasal verbs*). Sampel penelitian ini adalah mahasiswa-mahasiswi semester empat program studi bahasa Inggris Universitas Riau. Partisipan berjumlah 38 orang mahasiswa. Data yang digunakan berupa kuantitatif data dan instrument penelitiannya sebuah tes pilihan berganda yang terdiri atas 50 pertanyaan mengenai arti dari frasa-frasa kata kerja. Data dianalisis dengan menghitung skor masing-masing mahasiswa dalam menjawab tes dan diklasifikasi menjadi level-level tertentu sesuai dengan formula oleh Harris. Hasil dari penelitian adalah bahwa dari 38 mahasiswa, 2 mahasiswa (5,25%) berada pada level ekselen, 11 mahasiswa (28,95%) berada pada level bagus, 7 mahasiswa (18,42%) berada pada level rata-rata, dan kebanyakan dari mahasiswa, yakni 18 mahasiswa (47,36%) berada pada level kurang mampu/kurang paham. Selain itu, skor rata-rata pemahaman mahasiswa mengenai arti dari frase-frase kata kerja bahasa Inggris adalah 51, 37. Hal ini berarti bahwa kemampuan mahasiswa dalam memahami arti dari frase kata kerja bahasa Inggris berada pada level kemampuan rata-rata. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan mahasiswa untuk lebih memfamiliarikan diri mereka dengan penggunaan frase kata kerja bahasa Inggris yang lebih terelaborasi. Mahasiswa juga bisa mengerti lebih jauh mengenai konseptualisasi dari frase kata kerja dalam banyak konteks dengan mempraktekkan menulis dan berbicara yang mengharuskan mereka untuk menggunakan frase kata kerja. Penelitian lebih lanjut dapat fokus pada penelitian mengenai masing-masing sub-topik dengan lebih rinci. Untuk peneliti lainnya, disarankan agar lebih fokus pada bagaimana menanggulangi kesulitan level tinggi dari materi-materi frase kata kerja.

**Kata kunci:** *frase kata kerja, kemampuan memahami arti*

## INTRODUCTION

The need of understanding phrasal verbs emerges as phrasal verbs are widely used by native speakers of English but they have been found to be difficult for second language learners to master (Moon, 1997; Kao, 2001). Phrasal verbs create special problems for language learners because there are so many of them and the combination of verb and particle seems so often completely random (Cornell, 1985; Side, 1990). The use of phrasal verb in English is common but unfortunately its function is not commonly understood by English learners.

The 2010 curriculum obliged English Study Program's students of Riau University have passed the study of vocabulary in their first semester. They also has taken the course for structures which means they should be able to recognize phrasal verbs in terms of its position in English structure and how it has a certain meaning according to a context.

As it is mentioned by McChary (2003) that no matter how well the students learn the grammar of a language, or no matter how well the sounds of the second language are studied, communication cannot occur in a meaningful way without the words to express a wide range of meanings.

Base on the writer's experience from asking directly to the fourth semester English major students of Riau University, many confessed that they did not know or not familiar with the term 'phrasal verbs' nor that they understood the use of it. But when the writer mentioned some of the examples of phrasal verbs, they admitted to have heard them and knew their meaning. However when writer mentioned another more complex use of phrasal verbs in different context of sentences, many failed to comprehend the right meaning of these phrasal verbs.

A Phrasal Verb is a phrase which consists of a verb in combination with a preposition or adverb or both, the meaning of which is different from the meaning of its separate parts: 'look after', 'work out' and 'make up for' are all phrasal verbs (Koprowski, 2005).

According to Trask (1993: 208) a phrasal verb is lexical verb "which consists of a simple verb combined with one or more particles" and whose meaning is typically unpredictable. Prepositions and adverbs can have a literal meaning which is spatial or "orientational", and then, as happens with all words, metaphorical meanings develop that are systematic extensions from the original core meaning. Many verbs in English can interact with an adverb or a preposition, and the verb + preposition/adverb complex is readily understood when used in its literal sense. These are some types of phrasal verbs:

1. Verb + preposition (prepositional phrasal verbs)
2. Verb + particle (particle phrasal verbs)
3. Verb + particle + preposition (particle-prepositional phrasal verbs)

Based on the explanation, this study aims to answer the question of " how is the ability of the fourth semester English study program of Riau University students in understanding meaning of phrasal verbs"

## **METHODOLOGY**

This is a descriptive research. It serves to describe, fond of describing (Hornby, 1974). Gay and Airasian (2000:275) state that descriptive method is useful for investigating a variety of educational problems and issues.

This type of research is used to describe and interpret the data being studied. The aim of this research is to find out about the ability of the fourth semester students of English Study Program of Riau University in understanding meaning of phrasal verbs. The place of this study is at English Study program FKIP-UR. The study was conducted from February to June 2015.

The population of this research is the 4th semester students who have passed content subjects English structure 1, 2 and 3. They consist of 3 classes: class A, class B and class C. Therefore, whether class A, class B or class C would be the sample of this research. In order to decide the sample, the writer used cluster sampling technique. Cluster sampling selects groups, not individuals (Gay and Airasian, 2000:129). All the members of selected groups have similar characteristics.

This research used quantitative data which was used to know the ability of the students of English Study Program of Riau University in understanding meaning of phrasal verbs. Multiple choice test was given to the students of forth semester in the purpose of finding out their basic knowledge regarding phrasal verbs.

This research was conducted using multiple choices test. Students were given multiple choices test consist of 30 questions about the meaning of phrasal verb in sentences in a text. The questions in this test adapted from several books of grammar and test instrument from academic journal about phrasal verbs.

To obtain the data on the ability in identifying English morphemes by the students at English study program FKIP-UR, the writer collected the data by giving a multiple choice test. There were 50 items in total. The time for doing the test was 60 minutes. The questions were about phrasal verbs. Before administering the test, the writer conducted a try-out. The try-out was used to know the quality of the test items, particularly to determine the facility value (difficulty level) of the test items. The test items would be accepted if the difficulty level (FV) is between 0,30-0,70 and it would be rejected if the difficulty level (FV) is below 0,30 (difficult) and over 0,70 (easy) (Heaton, 1975:173). After collecting all the data, the writer analyzed the data. The students' individual scores from the test were calculated by using the formula which was adapted from Harris (1974:79).

## **THE RESEARCH FINDINGS**

In conducting this research, the writer collected the data by giving a test in multiple choices to the students. Before giving the test, the writer conducted the tryout to another class, class C, in order to know the difficulty level of test item using formula from Heaton (1975). In addition, the result of students' test was classified by using Harris formula.

### **The Description of the Data in Try Out**

Before administering the test to the students, the writer conducted try out to the students from the other class. By using the formula from Heaton (1971), the result was found that 16 items were rejected because the difficulty level was below 0.30 and above 0.70. Those items were number 2, 9, 10, 13, 19, 23, 26, 29, 36, 43, 46 and 50 which were above 0.70, while 4 items under 0.30 were numbers 25, 32, 40, and 49.

### **The Description of the Data from the Test**

After revising items on the instruments, the writer continued her activity by giving a test to the students. It was done in order to know the students' ability in understanding phrasal verbs.

It was found that out of 38 students, 2 (5.26%) students were in excellent level of ability, 11 (28.95%) students were in good level of ability, 7 (18.42%) were in average level of ability, and for the most part, 18 (58.06%) students were in poor level of ability. In addition, the average score of the students in understanding meaning of phrasal verbs was 51.37. It meant that the students' ability in understanding English phrasal verbs was in the average level of ability.

#### **The Level of Students' Ability**

Test Score	Level of Ability	F	Percentage
80-100	Excellent	2	5.26%
60-79	Good	11	28.95%
50-59	Average	7	18.42%
0-49	Poor	18	47.36%

### **Interpretation of the Result**

Base on the result of the test that had been carried out by the writer to the fourth semester students of Riau University's English Department, it was found that their ability in understanding meaning of phrasal verbs was slightly on the average level, with the average score at 51.37.

As it has been known that there are three types of phrasal verbs in this case of study that the writer wanted to find out regarding to the understanding of the students, this result is in line with a theory about phrasal verbs.

This finding can be related to the previous study from Stefanowitsch & Gries in 2003 on how phrasal verbs function as a whole unit, thus they are considered as a separate lexical unit, reflecting the semantic unit of construction. It is consistent with construction grammar, where content and meaning are generally unpredictable.

The variation of types of phrasal verbs and their function as a whole unit where their content and meaning are generally unpredictable could lead to the result of why many of the students failed to completely understand their correct meaning.

## CONCLUSIONS

After conducting this research, as the aim of the research was to discover the ability of the fourth semester students of English Study Program of Riau University in understanding meaning of phrasal verbs, some conclusions can be drawn.

Students' ability in understanding meaning of phrasal verbs was in average level of ability. Out of 38 students, 2 (5.26%) students were in excellent level of ability, 11 (28.95%) students were in good level of ability, 7 (18.42%) were in average level of ability, and for the most part, 18 (58.06%) students were in poor level of ability. In addition, the average score of the students in understanding meaning of phrasal verbs was 51.37.

It meant that the students' ability in understanding English phrasal verbs was in the average level of ability. Based on the score of each subtopic, it was known that the students' ability in identifying particle-prepositional phrasal verbs was at the lowest score. This could be due to the less frequency of particle-prepositional phrasal verbs in English that lead to unfamiliarity of the students. In addition, the students' highest score was at the understanding of prepositional phrasal verbs. This could be caused by the familiarity of the students in encountering such type of phrasal verbs.

Finally, it can be concluded that the ability of the fourth semester students of English Department of Riau University in understanding meaning was barely average and need more improvement.

## REFERENCES

- Harris, David. 1974. *Testing English as a Second Language*. New York: Mc. Graw Hill Book Company.
- Heaton, J.B. 1975. *Writing English Language Testing*. New York: Longman Inc.
- Hornby, AS. 1974. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Kao, R. 2001. Where have the prepositions gone? A study of English prepositional verbs and input enhancement in instructed SLA. *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*, 39,195–215.
- Moon, R. (1997). Vocabulary connections: Multi-word items in English. In M.McCarthy (Ed.), *Vocabulary:Description, acquisition and pedagogy* (pp. 40-63). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Stefanowitsch, A. & S. Gries. (2003). Collostructions: investigating the interaction between words and constructions. *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics*, 8(2), 209-243.